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ABSTRACT

This document, prepared by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory's (AEL) School Family Relations Program, contains research of six special needs families: families with handicapped children, families with low socioeconmic status, minority families, rural Appalachian families, single-parent families, and two-job families. The synopses are based on an integration of literature reviews, secondary analysis of parent surveys, and interviews with school principals and counselors. Each synopsis covers historical background and trends, family characteristics, special problems, reponses of the schools, and future goals, and provides selected references. (BL)

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SCHOOL-FAMILY RELATIONS PROGRAM

SCOPE OF WORK #1, PART A
SPECIAL NEEDS FAMILIES: RESEARCH SYNOPSES

NIE Contract 400-83-0001

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Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc.
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SPECIAL NEEDS FAMILIES: RESEARCH SYNOPSES

The following synopses of special needs families include: Families with Handicapped Children, Families with Low Socioeconomic Status, Minority Families, Rural Appalachian Families, Single-Parent Families, and Two-Job Families.

These materials have been developed in connection with the Special Needs Families School-Family Relations Project conducted at AEL and funded by the National Institute of Education, Department of Education.

An essential component of the Special Needs Families Project has been to increase awareness and understanding of the life circumstances of the many varied family types in our society today. These synopses have been prepared as resource materials to aid in this effort.

The synopses are based on an integration of materials from a review of the pertinent literature, a secondary analysis of a recent AEL parent survey, and selected interviews with school principals and counselors. A more extensive discussion of these families may be found in Characteristics of Families With Special Needs in Relation to Schools (Snow, 1982). This document may be ordered from AEL or obtained through ERIC.

It is suggested that these synopses may be useful as resource materials for in-service workshops for teachers and other school staff, for college education courses, for parent resource centers, and for parent education groups.

FAMILIES WITH HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

Historical Trends

There have always been families with handicapped children. But until the middle of this century, there were few facilities or services for such children. Parents had nearly total responsibility for care of their handicapped children. The general attitude was that these children could not learn, could never be independent or productive, indeed, that there was no hope for them. This attitude has changed in recent decades due to a number of converging factors including the rehabilitation of injured World War II veterans, greater interest on the part of educators, and the development of organized interest groups such as the National Association for Retarded Citizens and the Council for Exceptional Children. In fact, special education has been called a twentieth century social movement. The philosophy of the movement has been that handicapped children can learn, that they are entitled to the opportunity to develop to their fullest potential, and that isolation and total dependency are unfair, unnecessary, and costly (Berger, 1981).

During the 1960's, organized parent groups began pressing for educational programs for their children. A series of favorable developments culminated in Public Law 94-142, the Education of All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 called the most far reaching and revolutionary legislation in education. The act says that all persons between ages 3-21 should be provided free and appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. The law requires diagnosis and individualization of educational programs. Parent involvement is mandated. Parents must be included as members of advisory committees and they must participate with the school staff in the development of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for their child. In addition, schools are

expected to look for children entitled to special educational services and to inform parents of their rights (Kroth, 1978).

Statistics in 1980, showed almost four million children (or about 8 percent of the total school-age population) in the country were receiving special education and related services. The three most numerous types of handicaps served were: speech impaired (30.8% of total served), learning disabled (29.3%), and mentally retarded (23.2%). Figures for 1982 showed over four million children or about 10 percent of the total enrollment receiving services (Education Department). There is some controversy as to whether there are many handicapped children still to be identified and served. One view is that most handicapped children have been found through Child Find. Another view is that more money and child advocacy are needed to take care of the "hidden children."

Characteristics

Research shows that all parents of handicapped children acknowledge stress at the birth of their child. The process of adaptation is complex and often slow to develop. It is believed that the adjustment takes place in stages which may take weeks, months, or years (Chinn et al., 1978).

In a recent AEL survey (Snow, 1982), parents of handicapped children as a group were found to be significantly different from all other parents only in the following ways: (1) more frequent talks with doctors (about child), and (2) a greater tendency to perceive themselves as having "special problems as a parent." However, further analysis revealed that the educational level of parents was the factor which most clearly differentiated both families with a handicapped child as well as families in general. Parents (with a handicapped child) with low educational attainment were least likely and those with high educational attainment were most likely to: a) share

responsibility for the child, b) belong to an organization that provides help for parents, c) talk often with other parents, d) have a confidant with whom to discuss child, e) agree that all parents need help, and f) say that some kind of needed help for parents is not available locally. Other studies have shown that the more severe handicapping conditions occur more frequently among low socio-economic families, particularly those living in poverty. For example, mild mental retardation has sometimes been reversed by good nutrition and intervention programs.

Thus it appears that in their relationship with parents of handicapped children, school staff need to consider the different circumstances, life styles, and needs found within this group. Some families with a handicapped child appear to have a network of social support consisting of friends, relatives, and formal organizations. Other families either do not seek or have not readily found such support; they are much more alone in facing the task of rearing a handicapped child.

Special Problems

As indicated previously, in spite of the sweeping change in attitude and treatment of handicapped persons in this country, the parents of these children still do not find the fact of the child's handicap easy to accept. They are often frustrated, fearful, despairing and guilt-ridden. They need both emotional support and specific information. An empathetic professional can help. The time and physical demands required to care for a handicapped child can also be a large problem. Parents need some relief, an occasional break, from the care they must provide. This is especially true if the child is severely handicapped. Planning ahead is usually necessary if a parent is to get away either for recreation or a meeting at school.

A handicapping condition may make parent/child bonding more difficult

and negative reactions from friends and relatives can lead to stress for the parents. Thus handicapped children may be more at risk of being abused. Parents need information and a support network if they are to accept the child and provide a good environment for his/her development. However, some parents are not aware of the community services that are available to help them.

Obtaining the best educational experience for their child can also be a problem even today. Studies have shown that the quality of education provided to special education children varies widely. It has been suggested that parents need to learn to be advocates for their children's education and be capable of checking its quality. Yet most parents of handicapped children, particularly those of lower socio-economic status, are at a disadvantage in dealing with professionals, believing themselves incompetent to make decisions about their children.

The Relation of Families With Handicapped Children To The School

According to the terms of the law (94-142) parents of special education students must be involved in their child's educational program. In order for the law to work for the best interests of the children, parents and school people must work together as equals. However, in reality, parent involvement has not been extensive. There are numerous reasons. Many parents are uncomfortable and fearful in this kind of a role. They do not feel free to discuss, question, disagree with professionals. They do not insist on their rights, even though they may not be satisfied with their child's program. On the other hand, professionals have not been trained to work with parents and may not see the advantage of parent involvement. Sharing power with parents may be threatening to school staff. Some communicate by word or tone that they know best which shuts off open communication with parents. Accord-

ing to Scritchfield (1981) it is the structure of the situation that makes it difficult for parents and teachers to view each other as partners and team members. Parents are inherently structural unequals with professionals. The reason is that parents are dependent upon professionals for obtaining services for their children in whom they are highly interested. Professionals are not dependent on particular parents in the same way. A proposed solution is for parents to form coalitions so that they can then come to the team situation with more status than that of isolated individuals.

Another problem has to do with the fact that the law stipulates that the child receive education in "the least restrictive environment." Because of this, most special education students spend at least part of their day in a regular classroom. Thus in-service training for regular teachers, was and is still, an urgent need. They need help in understanding, not only the child, but also his/her parents and the importance of parental involvement. Parents of handicapped children are often conflicted regarding the mainstreaming of their child. They understand the advantages for their child and for other non-handicapped children. But they also fear the disadvantages: possible psychological problems (non-acceptance) for their child and the loss of parent support groups for themselves (Gallagher, 1980).

Responses of the Schools

Many of the programs suggested or in operation for the parents of handicapped children are similar to those for any parent, for example: newsletters with tips and information, suggested ways that parents can reinforce what has been learned at school, parent volunteers, group meetings (speakers, discussions, films), and lending libraries.

Other programs have been developed in various school system especially for the parents of handicapped children. Some of these include: 1) a

parent outreach program in which parents of handicapped children provide assistance and information on a one-to-one basis to new parents of handicapped children, 2) a class for fathers which offers a support group, opportunities for father--child interaction, child-rearing information and knowledge of community resources, 3) a series of weekly instructional meetings after which the parents of hearing impaired children play an extensive part in the education of their children, 4) a training program for parents of handicapped children from birth to 5 years old in which parents' needs for information and support are met and parent involvement in their child's education is encouraged, and 5) Lekotuk's therapeutic intervention program which focuses on the family unit, attempts to normalize and assimilate the child within the family and the family within society through the use of play. Parents are provided with toys and guidance to help their child. The human interaction of the child with other family members during the play process is the critical element.

More general recommendations for schools are the following: 1) educators can assist parents in developing and reinforcing their children's skills in the course of their daily activities. By training parents or other family members, the parents, the child, and the school can benefit. Parents can assist at school and free teachers from many tasks. Parents will have an opportunity to share information and experience with teachers and other parents of handicapped children. They can learn to be advocates. Parents can become informed, learn skills, obtain support, and help others, and 2) school counselor can spend more time with handicapped students, special education teachers, and the parents of handicapped students. They can lead discussion groups, help parents to look at alternatives, provide support and respect, etc. (Gallagher, 1980)

Future Goals

It is recognized that parent attitude is a key part of helping a handicapped child cope. Thus more research is needed on families with handicapped children. This research can then be translated into more effective programs for these parents.

School staffs need training in the benefits and techniques of working with parents of handicapped children. Course work in this area would be especially helpful for regular teachers and for school counselors.

Understanding of handicapping conditions, keeping up with the development of new knowledge, new refined diagnoses, etc., would also be beneficial to schools and the families involved.

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FAMILIES WITH LOW SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS

Historical Background

Children from low socioeconomic families have generally achieved at a lower level in school than have children from middle or upper socioeconomic backgrounds. Many studies have provided evidence of this relationship (Coleman, et al, 1966, Goldstein, 1967).

Searching for the reasons and for the means to change this situation has preoccupied numerous educators, researchers, and policy makers through the years. This was particularly apparent during the sixties when, as a part of the War on Poverty, compensatory education and enrichment programs (for example Head Start and Follow Through) were provided to many poor children. Also, during this period, the important role of the parent in relation to children's learning was highlighted.

With more experience, educators and researchers began to view low SES families in a different light. New theories were developed. Some of these recognized that although the family life of the poor child might not have prepared him/her in many ways for the middle class school system, his/her family environment was generally very rich and valuable in other ways. In this view, the term "cultural deprivation" represents a value judgment, the result of looking at the world through the lenses of white middle class culture (Baratz and Baratz, 1970; Keddie, 1973). Out of these theories came the recommendation that schools become acquainted with their children's families' life circumstances, appreciate their positive aspects, and build on them in their work with children. However, in spite of the emphasis on this particular special need family group during the sixties and seventies, the successes of individual programs, and increasing numbers of these children who have gone on

into higher education, the relationship between low SES and low achievement remains. It is still the case that children from higher-income families have, in general, more access to the experiences that promote school-related skills than do children from low-income families.

Characteristics

The most commonly used indicators of social class are income level and educational attainment. Although there are cases in which these two measures are inconsistent (individuals with low income and high education or high income and low education) the children we are describing are those from homes in which both the income level and the education of parents are low. These families' identification with low socioeconomic status is of long standing. These parents often have low self-esteem, feel excluded and hopeless to change their situation, and are likely to experience a high level of stress.

There is evidence, however, that low SES parents have strong faith in the power of education and hold high educational aspirations for their children. But they generally do not have the resources (of time, money, and knowledge) to provide their children with the experiences of enrichment or remediation necessary for them to excel in school. Low socio-economic status parents appear to be less tied into both formal and informal networks which affect child-rearing than are other parents. A recent AEL survey (Snow, 1982) revealed that low SES parents differed from other parents in the following ways:

- less contact during the past year with teacher, doctors, and other formal sources of help
- less likely to belong to one or more community organizations
- less contact with other parents (about children)
- less likely to have read anything about child rearing in recent month
- less likely to be planning to obtain more education for themselves

However, positive attitudes toward talks with teachers, doctors, and other parents indicated a potential for greater involvement.

Another complication is the fact that many low socioeconomic status families also belong to other special needs categories, for example, single parent families, isolated rural families, families with a handicapped child. In fact, the experience of being a single parent family (or a member of one of the other categories) appears to be vastly different for those who are low SES and those who are not.

Special Problems

It is obvious that the major problem faced by low socioeconomic status families has to do with being unable to earn a decent income. These families have low skills and experience low wages, frequent unemployment, and in many cases, discrimination. This is particularly true for low SES families who are also single parent or minority families. Problems of physical and mental health, poor health care, and poor nutrition follow.

Children learn at an early age how their parents are regarded by others. If parents feel excluded, helpless, and hopeless in their situation, they will transmit these attitudes to their children. And when children do not feel good about themselves, this has a negative effect on their ability to learn and to achieve goals.

Low Socioeconomic Status Families and Their Relation to the Schools

As mentioned earlier, in general children from low-income families do less well in reading and other school subjects than do children from middle or high income families. This gap in achievement begins to be apparent at grades two and three, grows much wider by grades four and five, and continues through high school. A recent study (Chall, 1982) found that low income children fell below the national norms at about grades four and five and con-

tinued to lose ground after that. It is believed the gap is largely accounted for by differences in adults in the home who read, differences in the encouragement of children to read, differences in the availability of reading materials in the home and differences in the ability to teach children to plan and organize.

Low income, undereducated parents are easily intimidated by the middle class, professional school staff. Teachers often don't realize the extent of such feelings which make parents reluctant to participate, to become actively involved in school programs, to take part as an equal in IEP (Individualized Education Plan) conferences. Real communication is very difficult to achieve.

Under the circumstances there often is a gap between parents' and teachers' views of the children's potential. Parents tend to overestimate and teachers to underestimate the children's academic abilities. However, it has been shown that increased contacts between these parents and the teachers has the effect of bridging the gap between parent and teacher expectations and improving the attitude of each toward the other (Comer, 1980).

It seems clear that the effort to understand and communicate with low SES families is essential if these children are to have a chance. When it appears to a child that teachers stand for values and require behavior which is the opposite of that which parents stand for, the child will tend to reject the learning situation. It is crucial for the child's present and future that the home and the school not be at odds.

The Responses of the Schools

In an attempt to provide enrichment, challenge, and support to low SES children, schools together with state and federal education agencies have provided such programs as Head Start, Home Start, Follow-Through, Chapter One, HOPE and others. These programs have made conscious efforts to involve parents,

to help them to help their children.

Children need to know that their parents and teachers talk to each other and have common concerns. They need to see their parents respected and contributing to the schools.

Future or Long-term Solutions

Given the very uneven distribution of income in the USA (the top one-fifth families receive 41% of the total income while the bottom one-fifth families receive only 5.4% of the income), many believe that a government policy of full-employment and publicly guaranteed work for at least one parent in every family with a child is the only way to insure the opportunity to develop the potential of each child. Related are the needs for proper health care for all and good child care services (Keniston, 1979).

Other long-range goals which would be particularly beneficial to low socioeconomic status families would be an end to discrimination (especially of women and blacks) in the market place and ways to decrease the pressure and strain of living in a complex, competitive society.

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MINORITY FAMILIES

Within the American family numerous different ethnic, racial, or religious groups have always been represented. In recent decades the percent of all minority students in the American public schools has increased dramatically, particularly in the largest school districts. Asians have had the fastest percentage increase, but the biggest growth in numbers has been among Hispanic students (over 3 million).

Although all minorities have some experiences in common in relation to the schools, each has its own unique history, values, styles of child-rearing, etc. This paper will focus on black families, historically the most prominent minority in the Appalachian Region.

Historical Perspective

In order to understand the present relationship between black families and the schools, it is important to look at the history of black people in this country, particularly as it relates to the educational institution.

Black people in the United States have experienced slavery, segregation, and discrimination. The economic and psychological consequences of these experiences have only begun to be reversed in recent decades.

There was, of course, no attempt to provide education for blacks during the time of slavery; in fact, in the later decades of its existence, learning to read was forbidden to slaves. After emancipation, education became more possible. But in many parts of the country (especially in the South), it was viewed as only appropriate for the elite. When public schools were established, black and white children were expected to attend separate schools. Segregation was eliminated first in the North, but remained the rule in the South until the mid-20th century. It has been recognized that black schools

were not only separate from white schools but were unequal. Physical facilities were less desirable, funding was lower, and black teachers were less well trained than were white teachers. In addition, the curriculum was often geared toward training for manual occupations. Black children were not expected to go on to higher education and higher occupations (Lightfoot, 1978; McAdoo, 1981).

In 1954, the Supreme Court decision of Brown vs. the Board of Education marked the beginning of a slow process of desegregation of the public schools which is still not complete. Large-scale migrations of blacks from the South to the North and East and of middle-class whites from large cities to the suburbs have resulted in a new kind of segregation. Ironically, at this time, schools are more integrated in the South than in the North.

In the 1960's the War on Poverty and the Civil Rights movement brought increased attention to the needs and rights of minorities. As a part of new legislation (Title I, Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965) aimed at improving educational opportunities for low-income and minority students, involvement of parents on advisory boards was mandated. Affirmative action practices in employment and in admittance to institutions of higher learning were required of those organizations receiving significant federal funding.

Throughout the history of blacks in this country, there have been evidences of the struggle for black families to attain a good education for their children. Some of the more recent manifestations have had to do with implementing integration practices, demanding community control of schools (in large city systems in the late 1960's) and protesting testing practices leading to disproportionate placement of black children in special education classes (Bresnick, 1978; Marion, 1979).

Characteristics

Recent AEL surveys of parents (Snow, 1982) indicate that black parents value schooling and want their children to have a good education. Black parents were more likely than white parents to be planning to return to school themselves. Black parents held higher educational aspirations for their children than did white parents. And all black parents, but especially those whose own educational attainment was low, believed that the schools would have "a great deal" of influence on their children's future. Other differences were found between black parents with less than a high school education and those with high school or more. Those with more education were similar to white parents with a high school education or more: they had frequent talks with teachers, were members of community organizations, used reading materials as a source of help in childrearing and had questions about childrearing. The black parents with less than a high school education were most likely to perceive themselves as having "special problems as a parent" and were most likely to say they talked frequently with other parents.

Another characteristic of most black families are close linkages between several households of related individuals. Both the single-parent family and the nuclear family tend to have a close network of relatives and friends who exchange emergency and everyday help, especially help in childrearing. This network support often makes it possible for mothers to take the opportunity of completing school and moving up economically. Childrearing then is viewed as a task to be shared with others (Quisenberry, 1982).

Special Problems

Blacks, as a group, have made notable educational progress in recent decades. More have attended institutions of higher education than ever before. Yet black students still lag behind white students on national standardized

achievement tests. And obtaining good jobs, full economic participation, has not followed upon educational attainment (McAdoo, 1981).

In other respects also, blacks remain disadvantaged compared to whites. The poverty rate is three times as high for black families as for all families. Forty-two percent of all black children live below the poverty level. One reason for this situation is the rapid growth in the number of single-parent black families maintained by women (40% of all black families in 1980). Blacks as a group also lack adequate health care. Lower life expectancies, higher infant mortality, more child fatalities, and a greater incidence of hypertension and comas are characteristic of black families. Over forty percent of all black children do not see a physician even once a year (McAdoo, 1981).

Relation to the Schools

Parent Involvement. Before the Supreme Court Decision of 1954, black parents in the North and West were seldom deeply involved in the schools or the PTA: this was left to the majority white parents. However, in the segregated black schools of the South, minority parents were often commited and active in their children's schools. With desegregation, often accompanied by ill-will, these parents hesitated to participate and no longer felt close to their schools. Thus, black parents in both the North and the South participated little in their children's schools. This did not mean they were satisfied. Large numbers of black students were placed in special education classes, labeled as "slow learners," and many dropped out before completing their high school education. But many of these parents felt they could do little to improve the situation. It was not until the 1960's when parent involvement was mandated in connection with Title I and PL94-142 and when social movements created a climate for questioning and demanding one's rights that black parents again became actively involved in the schools (Marion, 1979).

Attitudes of Black Parents. Some of the literature tells us black parents as a whole believe that a good education is the best advantage they can offer their children. The long struggle of blacks for equal educational opportunity certainly seem to bear this out. But others believe that many blacks have now become disillusioned. This has to do with the fact that even for those who have achieved high academic goals, full economic participation has not followed. This experience of a "job ceiling" may have led to "disillusionment" about the real value of schooling. Parents may communicate ambivalent attitudes toward schooling to their children. They may urge their child to work hard in school and to get more education than they, the parents, did. But at the same time, their experiences of underemployment and discrimination in the workplace send a different message, one which says "What's the use of trying?" According to this view, this ambivalence has its effect on the child's effort in school and on his/her probability of failure. Still another view is that the black parents' attitude is somewhere "between" cynicism and optimism (McAdoo, 1981; Lightfoot, 1978).

Attitudes of Teachers. Teachers have sometimes believed that black parents (especially low socioeconomic parents) do not value educational attainment for their children. Many white middle-class teachers have perceived black parents as being uninterested, apathetic about their children's achievement in school. Often this perception was related to the fact that the black parents did not frequently attend school functions such as open house, parent-teacher conferences, etc. Other reasons for this nonparticipation (for example, a past history of rejection by the schools or a feeling of being overwhelmed by the bureaucratic organization of the school) were not understood. A contributing factor to school staff attitudes may well have been the fact that, until recent decades, scholars tended to present only a negative view of black families (as disorganized, unstable) while ignoring their positive as-

pects. As a matter of fact, the majority of black families have developed viable forms of family life including successful strategies for coping with adversity (Lightfoot, 1978; Hill, 1972).

Lightfoot (1978) provides evidence that there are, in reality, no significant differences between black parents and teachers in educational values. Both value schooling and believe in the relationship between academic achievement and the child's chances in life. The trouble lies in the misperceptions these parents and teachers have of one another.

Responses of the Schools

Schools and families need to find ways to purposely come together to get to know and appreciate each other. This is especially true if parents and teachers come from different backgrounds. This may be a slow, difficult process but it can be done. A program through which the school-family relationship was built up over a period of years is described by Comer (1980). The presence of parents changed the climate of the school and it became more conducive to children's learning.

Some more specific suggestions proposed or tried by schools in order to build collaboration between minority parents and teachers are the following:

(1) Teachers should be knowledgeable about the historical development of minority parental attitudes toward education.

(2) Teachers should have an understanding of minority cultures and the various theories concerning minority families. Sensitivity to cultural backgrounds is essential.

(3) Teachers should recognize the importance of their first contact with the parent, whether by phone or by written communication. Courtesy and respect and a positive approach are crucial.

(4) In personal contacts with parents, school staffs should "treat minority parents as co-equal. Co-equal means, among

other things, a respect for minority parent viewpoints. Extend the courtesy of listening and soliciting input from parents. In the past, school personnel have often told minorities what is going to be done rather than involving them in the decision-making" (Marion, 1979).

(5) Teachers might encourage parents to bring a friend or advocate to a meeting, if they wish.

(6) The school staff might enlist persons well-known and respected in the community to serve as contacts in order to encourage parents to become involved.

(7) The schools might hold community workshops to explain school programs and use churches or other community organizations to disseminate information. A major obstacle to parent participation is lack of information (Marion, 1979).

(8) Different approaches used to involve different types of black parents. Some may respond best to personal contact or a community liaison; others (generally those more highly educated) may be reached more easily through community organizations or reading materials.

(9) In parent education programs, leaders may find it helpful to include important members of the parents' family/friend networks or use the program to construct new social networks among program participants, e.g., peer support or mutual help groups.

(10) Parenting programs may include some awareness and understanding of ethnically diverse parenting styles: By becoming aware of how their traditional or ethnic values and modern values interact and affect their parenting behavior, parents can become confident and able to deal with conflicts.

(11) Ethnic content can be incorporated in the curriculum. Parents may contribute to this curriculum.

(12) Teachers can create a classroom atmosphere reflecting an acceptance and respect for ethnic and racial differences.

(13) School staffs which are multi-racial and multi-ethnic provide models for children and foster respect for differences.

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RURAL APPALACHIAN FAMILIES

Historical Background

Both the physical terrain and the development of a unique subculture in rural Appalachia have led to the greater possibility of isolated rural families in this area than in most other parts of the country. In order to understand rural Appalachian families today, it is important to know something about the development of the subculture, what its major characteristics were, and how it has been affected by social change impinging from outside.

The earliest settlers came into the southern Appalachian Region at the end of the 18th century. Migration continued at a slow pace until the mid-19th century. From then until the early 20th century, the offspring of the settlers lived in the Appalachian mountain hollows, virtually isolated from the rest of the country when industrialization and increased communication were bringing about rapid changes. The rural isolated life was chosen by many of the first settlers because it gave them the freedom to live as they wished. And with long years of almost no contact with the outside world, these early preferences developed into a unique way of life. Survival was by means of farming and hunting. Self-sufficiency, closeness to nature, and independence were all highly valued. Appalachian settlers were action-oriented; they disliked routine and planning. They were person-oriented rather than goal-oriented. Extensive personal interaction resulted in a great deal of social cohesiveness within the isolated communities. Other traits usually mentioned in the conventional portrait of the Appalachian are believed to have developed from the hardness and disappointments of their lives. These include fatalism, other worldliness, and a continuing sense of anxiety (Erikson, 1976; Weller, 1965).

The family was tremendously important as it was the only institution in the early days of settlement. All the individual's needs were taken care of by the family. Religion was very important to early Appalachians but was viewed more as a personal experience than a formal membership in an organization. The early settlers did not consider formal education necessary for their way of life. In fact, it was believed to be dangerous, as it might make their children unfit for practical mountain life. Therefore, even after schools were established and attendance required, there was resistance. Children were frequently taken out of school in order to help with the work at home, and the peer pressure encouraged boys not to succeed.

Early Changes

Over time the soil became depleted and supporting themselves became more difficult for the descendants of the Appalachian settlers. At the end of the 19th century, outside lumber industries discovered the vast timber resources in Appalachia. In the second and third decades of the 20th century, coal companies began coming into the area. The Appalachian people were exploited by these outside interests. Valuable resources were taken out, but the people had little to show for it. Their economic condition, in fact, took a downward trend. However, in spite of these changes and the fact that many Appalachians worked for the coal companies, they tended to preserve their way of life, their attachment to place and family (Erikson, 1976).

Later Changes

After World War II, it was no longer economically possible for rural Appalachians to live independently. The land could not support them and there were not enough jobs available locally. They began to be drawn to the cities where jobs were more plentiful. It was at this time that "members of the Appalachian communities began to shift their orientation to the larger society.

The larger society became their model" (Photiadis, 1980). Millions migrated to the cities of the north and east. The more skilled and those who had finished high school were the most successful in obtaining jobs and economic independence. However, they remained attached to the land and kin of their roots. There was much movement back and forth for visits and important occasions. Information about life in other parts of the country was carried back by these migrants. During this period, the advent of television also became a powerful instrument for social changes in the Region.

Most Appalachians were able to adjust to the changing conditions, to identify with the larger society while retaining some of their unique heritage. However, a minority of families were unable to do so. These were the families with fewer resources (economic, educational, emotional) who were not able to take care of their needs either by remaining in Appalachia or by migrating. These are described as "families in retreat"; they adopted nonconventional means of adjustment by retreating into welfare, into close involvement with a sectarian fundamentalist church, and into association with a small cluster of other families in like circumstances (Photiadis, 1980). They appeared to be uninterested in changing their lives. However, in fact, they were afflicted with many problems, both physical and mental; and had given up hope of a better life. At the present time, there are adults in the Region who have grown up in such a family environment and are now perpetuating this style of life which resembles that of "the culture of poverty" (Lewis, 1965).

Characteristics of Rural Appalachian Families

Today, there is not <u>one</u> description which fits all rural Appalachian families. Instead, there are many different family situations, different subgroups of families, within most Appalachian communities. Most can be described as conventional. They have retained at least a part of the indigenous culture

but have also found a place in relation to the larger society. Within the conventional group there can be found a range of economic conditions. (The poor economy in the nation and the Region have resulted in many layoffs in recent years lessening the security of many families for the first time.) A minority of rural Appalachian families are nonconventional (or "families in retreat" in Photiadis' terms). They can be found in neighborhoods or clusters in most parts of central Appalachia. They have developed new group norms different from the original Appalachian culture by which they are able to justify accepting welfare, not making an effort to keep children in school, etc. And in addition to the families who for generations have lived in the same area, there are also some relative newcomers who have chosen to move to a physically isolated area.

Although in one sense most of the families in these very rural sections of Appalachia are physically isolated, all are not socially isolated. For example, in a recent AEL survey of parents (Snow, 1982) it was found that some parents (usually those with little education) were apathetic and withdrawn from formal or informal contacts related to childrearing. Many others, however, were almost as involved in contacts as parents anywhere and were more likely than most to have questions about child-rearing and to express their needs for more services. Transportation is a crucial need if contacts with others are to be maintained. But psychological barriers, lack of motivation, is probably a more important factor in explaining those who are isolated.

It is important to understand the complexity of the situation and the reason behind the variation in lifestyles of rural Appalachian families. In working with parents in the rural counties of Appalachia, schools need to recognize that different types of isolated rural families imply different school-related needs and the development of different kinds of programs.

Special Problems

It is no surprise that the small number of unconventional or "families in retreat" have the greatest number of problems; the most obvious being economic, physical health, and mental health. With little education or prospects for themselves, it is difficult for these parents to encourage and motivate their children to stay in school.

With the increasing economic and social integration of Appalachia into the larger society, role conflicts within the family have become more noticeable. Many teenagers are facing a conflict between wanting to maintain the traditional close family ties and wanting to leave home for college and/or work. The lack of employment opportunities in their rural Appalachian communities makes such a conflict severe (Photiadis, 1983).

The changing roles of women are apparent in rural Appalachia, although not to the extent that is true in the rest of the country. However, even though more women are working outside the home than before, the traditions of male dominance and women's sacrifices for family and kin are still strong. As social change continues, as rural Appalachian women continue to receive conflicting messages about their roles from their local communities and from the larger society and most Appalachian women become at least as success oriented as their husbands, it is anticipated that greater role conflict between Appalachian husbands and wives may be experienced in the future (Photiadis, 1983).

Preserving the original Appalachian subculture in spite of the increasing influence of the larger society is another matter which many view as a problem.

Relations to Schools

As mentioned previously, attitudes toward formal education were generally negative in earlier times in rural Appalachia. However, formal education was increasingly seen by Appalachians, particularly after World War II, as a means of obtaining a better job and a higher standard of living the only way to succeed in life. The most noticeable improvement in the 1970's was an increase in the number who finished high school. In recent studies nearly one-half of rural teenagers planned to go to college and a similar percent of parents expected their children to go to college. Low SES parents showed a particularly dramatic improvement in their attitudes toward education for their children. This change toward more positive views of education has not yet shown up in actual educational attainment. However, indications are, that in the very near future, many rural Appalachian young people will attend college, girls as well as boys (Phodiatis, 1983).

Responses of the Schools

In the '60's and '70's, there were many efforts to improve education in Appalachia through special programs supported by state and federal governments. An example was an experiment in parent involvement in the education of their pre-school children through the use of home visitors, television programs, and mobile pre-school classes (HOPE, Appalachia Educational Laboratory). Various other ways to involve parents in the schools and in the education of their children have been attempted. The generally positive attitude of parents toward education combined with the gap between their educational attainment and that which they aspire to for their children, make working with parents a potentially successful program both for students and parents. Parents could learn to see the need for encouraging their children in school and some specific ways to help them.

Some more specific suggestions based on research findings include: 1) volunteer tutors to provide children (especially teenagers) help with homework which some parents do not feel capable of doing; 2) trips outside the area and exchange teachers from other parts of the country in order to broaden children's experiences; 3) adult education classes in nutrition, communication between parent and child, and parenting in general; 4) teachers, counselors, or county extension agents trained to understand the history and the reasons for the diversity of families found in rural Appalachia today; and 5) teachers, counselors, county extension agents trained in skills used in helping families resolve role conflicts (whether between parents and teenagers or between spouses).

Future Proposal--Need To Know

Community Development Programs have been suggested by Photiadis as a means of improving conditions for rural Appalachian families and to prevent more from becoming "families in retreat." Personal interaction would be used as a technique. The worker would begin by setting up situations where small groups of people could interact with each other repeatedly on a community or subcommunity level. The situation would revolve around a felt need. (Some examples based on interviews in the area would be: a pre-school education program, recreational activities for teenagers, a program to increase communication between parents and teenagers, a program to prevent school drop-outs or to assist those who have already dropped out.) Information could be exchanged or released informally in such a setting. Out of such repeated personal interaction, new bonds would be established and new organizations gradually emerge. The participants would learn to work together to solve common problems, leaders would emerge, and new bases for self-esteem and achievement would be found. The first concern would be to create the com-

munity development organization, linking together the different local organizations. The organization could later be used for reaching broader objectives such as economic ones, which are the strongest felt needs (Phodiatis, 1980, 1983).

Possibly schools could consider whether similar organizations and training of parents in leadership and decision-making skills would not also be beneficial in helping the school attain its goals.

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SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES

Trends

In recent decades a marked trend in American family life has been a dramatic increase in the percent of single-parent families. In 1982, 22 percent of all children lived in one-parent families, compared with 12 percent in 1970. Approximately 20 percent of all households with children under 18 are single-parent households. Nine-tenths of the single-parent households consist of mothers and children. This trend is expected to continue. It is predicted that one out of two children born today is expected to experience the single-parent family situation before age 18 (Bureau of Labor, 1981; Masnick and Bane, 1980).

Characteristics

The single-parent household experience may be either short-term or long-term. The majority of single parents do remarry.

According to a recent AEL survey, single-parent families are similar to other parents in many ways. However, single-parent families are more prevalent among the black population and among the urban population. Single parents are more likely than other parents to be planning a return to school for themselves and to perceive themselves as having "special problems as parents" (Snow, 1982).

It is important to recognize that among single-parent families there are very clear differences. The following factors appear to be vital in determining what the single-parent household experience will be like: 1) Socioeconomic status. Much of the stress of female-headed single parent families is due to the fact that most of these families have very low incomes; 2) Length of time since the change from dual to single-parent household. A

period of adjustment can be expected before a sense of stability is again achieved; and 3) Single-parent families who have never been dual parent families. Of particular concern to the schools are unmarried teenage mothers who often drop out of school. Thus it is clear that single-parent families should not be viewed as a homogeneous group (Finn, 1981; Snow, 1982).

Special Problems

A major problem of single parent families headed by women is that their income is much less, in general, than that of two-parent households. There are many reasons for this: the mother's earnings are the family's main source of support, most of these mothers are lacking in work training and experience, most work in traditional "female" occupations where pay is low and many are not full time, regular employees. In addition, approximately two-thirds of these mothers do not receive the basic employee benefits: health insurance, sick leave, retirement (Masnick and Bane, 1980).

Single parents often experience a high degree of stress due to bearing all the responsibility for the family. The work and emotional load is heavy; they are often pressed for money and for time. This stress may lead to depression. Highest levels of stress are reported among the recently divorced, separated, or widowed. In addition, the single female parent often experiences the negative attitudes of others in the community rather than the social support of family and friends. In psychological terms, female heads of households report much lower self-esteem and much less optimism about the future than parents in nuclear families (Options in Education Series 1980-81).

Providing child care is another major problem for single mothers. As formal child care is lacking or very expensive in most communities, single mothers must usually work out very complex arrangements for child care which

are fragile and easily come apart. The working single mother may have to leave her children alone for a few hours, not because she wants to, but because she has no choice. These children make up a part of the growing group of "latch key children" in this country. Also many single mothers have "pink collar jobs" so that it is difficult for them to take phone calls on the job.

The Effects on Children

The adjustment to life in a single-parent household is often difficult for a child, at least in the beginning. The child may feel at fault or fault the single parent. The child may feel alone in this experience. Parental death, divorce, and separation, in that order, are the top three stress-producing factors for children (Ourth and Zakariya, 1982).

Perceptions of the single-parent family as "deficient or unhealthy" held by others in the community can affect the child negatively. Teachers and others may sometimes expect less of these children, and tend to excuse poor performance or behavior which can be detrimental.

As has already been noted, poverty and less than adequate child care are often characteristics of single-parent households headed by women. All of these factors--stress, poverty, poor quality child care, negatively affect the child's learning and development.

On the other hand, members of most single-parent families adjust to the new situation after a period of time. And some positive outcomes of the experience have been recorded. Children of single-parent families tend to become independent and take on more responsibility earlier. They are more likely to learn to negotiate and to be involved in family decision-making than are children from other families. And often a greater closeness develops between the single parent and the children (Options in Education

Series 1980-81; Russell, 1981).

The Schools and the Single-Parent Family

Some schools operate on a negative definition of a single-parent home and have low expectations for the children of these families.

But others perceive the single-parent family as just one of a number of different family types in our society today. These schools actively try to support single-parent families. Some ways this has been done include: 1) Awareness workshops for teachers; 2) Child discussion groups led by counselors (single-parent children learn to discuss and share their feelings; they find they are not unique); 3) Conferences, meetings, some office hours held at night or on weekends to accomodate working parents; 4) Records of the one-parent families in the school: this information made available to teachers; 5) The teaching of basic survival skills to children who are alone at home for a part of the day. These include: (a) basic first aid, (b) how to prepare simple nutritious meals, and (c) how and why to call a doctor, the fire department, the police; 6) The recognition of the single-parent family as a legitimate family type. For special days, ask children to make a card or present for "a special grown up person," rather than just the mother or the father; 7) The child's progress reports sent to both the custodial and non-custodial parents; 8) Child care provided during parent conferences or school meetings; 9) The child's records sent promptly when he/she moves (single-parent children tend to move about more); 10) Support groups/systems for single parents encouraged through providing information, education, counseling, and through collaboration with other agencies such as mental health agencies; 11) Awareness on the part of teachers and counselors when children are going through a change in family circumstances. (The child can be encouraged to express his/her feelings by dramatic play, painting,

puppet shows, creative writing projects, etc. Books, stories about children going through separation or divorce will help the child involved and his/her peers; and 12) Special events planned to encourage the involvement of any or all the significant adults in the child's life. (In one school, an early pancake breakfast to which the child had invited "a special person" drew non-custodial fathers, custodial fathers, mothers, and stepparents.

At a recent conference on Single-Parent Families and the School (1983), Dr. Spock had the following suggestions for schools: 1) Single-parent families need help "such as an after-school activity program and counseling." The children need "not only good custodial care but creative opportunities to develop hobbies and interests that are maturing. . . such opportunities should be provided by the schools"; 2) Teachers should know about their children's family situations; 3) Schools should look for and request textbooks which portray many different family types, not just the nuclear family; 4) Schools should use evening and weekend hours for conferences; and 5) Schools could allow children to attend a school near their mother's work.

Further Study Needed

Much more needs to be learned in order to understand the child's situation in the single-parent family. Some of the areas yet to be investigated in any depth are: 1) the role of different kinds of social support systems for parents and for children in the single parent household, and 2) the effects on the child of different types and amounts of interaction experienced by the child, e.g., the single-parent child may be a member of more than one household.

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TWO-JOB FAMILIES

Trends

One of the major changes in American family life in recent years has been the unprecedented and increasing rate with which women have joined the paid labor force. A great increase has occurred among women with children under 18, with the greatest increase of all among women with pre-school children. According to the U.S. Department of Labor, 60% of all married couples with children were two-job families in 1980. A number of factors have contributed toward this trend which is expected to continue. The two-job family is fast becoming the norm. A recent AEL survey (Snow, 1982) reveals that two-job families are no different from other families in many respects. However, there are some special problems.

Special Problems

Typically, two-job families experience: 1) a scarcity of time and energy due to the demands of the job and the home, 2) a problem in providing satisfactory child care for their children. High mobility in this country often means that grandparents and other relatives are not available to provide this service, and good quality formal day care facilities are scarce and expensive. Therefore, multiple care strategies involving very complicated scheduling must often be employed. In some cases parents may have no choice but to leave their child unsupervised for a few hours after school; these are referred to as latchkey children (Lein and Blehar, 1979; Aldons, 1982).

All the evidence is that parents are very concerned about their children's well-being and development. These problems common to two-job families can lead to severe stress; chances of this are lessened if there are relatives available to provide a support system and if the husband takes on some respon-

sibility for children and the household.

These problems tend to be more severe in the United States today than in most other industrialized countries where family cash benefits are the norm and quality child care is available for all children from the very young to the school-aged adolescent (Kamerman, 1982).

Effects on Children

What effects does the two-job family have on children? Earlier studies and discussions (1930's-1960's) focused almost exclusively on negative effects on child development. However, more carefully conducted research from the 1960's to the present provide repeated evidence that the children of working mothers do not differ from those of non-working mothers. Maternal employment by itself does not have any predictable effect upon the child. Other factors such as family income, job prestige, family size, and birth order are more highly associated with different child outcomes (Kamerman, 1982).

As a matter of fact some definitely positive outcomes have been found to be related to maternal employment: 1) children (sons and daughters) in two-job families are less likely to view parental roles in stereotyped ways. They are more likely to favor equality for women; 2) daughters of working mothers have more self-confidence, are more independent; and 3) two-job families tend to move less often; therefore, there is less disruption in children's school careers.

Relationships to the School

How is the parents' relationship to their child's school changed when they are a two-job family?

It is, of course, more difficult for these parents to be physically present at school. Therefore, communication must rely more on messages,

newsletters, phone calls, etc. Many parents are interested, but find it impossible to translate their interest into active involvement because of time constraints. This can lead to frustration. Another factor is that the traditional roles may continue in some degree even for the two-job family in that contacts with the child's school may still be regarded as "the mother's business," cutting down on the possibilities for parent-school contact (Snow, 1982).

Being a two-job family may also make it difficult to notify parents in case of an emergency. And time constraints may lead to less careful checking on child's school work, homework by parents.

Possible Responses of the School to Two-Job Families

The following ideas have been tried or proposed by educators: 1) Schedule more school events in the evenings or on weekends; 2) Hold a workshop for teachers on the two-job family (trends, effects, the future, etc.); 3) Consciously develop ways for parents to contribute and thus feel a part of the school even though they cannot be physically present. Expect interest, make involvement possible; 4) Get involved in the problem of adult supervision after school, either directly or by allowing other organizations which can provide good child care to use school buildings, facilities; and 5) Provide children who must spend some time alone with "survival skills," practical training. Provide a Phone Friend Hotline for the children. Provide a Homework Hotline (in some systems teachers are paid extra to man the phone and answer homework questions). (Robinson, 1983)

Need for Future Study

More needs to be known about the two-job family and the school.

The workplace (employers) and the community (government) must recognize and respond to the needs of the two-job family, e.g., through flextime, time

off for school conferences, and the provision of quality child care during pre and post school hours. Only through the cooperation of these institutions, as well as the school and the family, will the child be able to receive maximum benefits from his/her schooling.

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